

CHAPTER 4

Prostitution in Egypt in the Nineteenth Century

Khaled Fahmy

dd5973805f2e381a1d373b924a2f2600
ebrary

In 1949 the Egyptian government closed down all state-licensed brothels, and two years later all forms of prostitution were finally outlawed. This final ban put an end to a troublesome and oscillating relationship between the Egyptian state and prostitution throughout much of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. This chapter limits itself to the history of prostitution in nineteenth-century Egypt and aims to draw the very broad outlines of the tenuous relationship between the state and organised society behind it on the one hand, and prostitution on the other. In addition to elaborating on what the main factors that affected the state's policies towards prostitution might have been, I offer some remarks on the different health, security and moral concerns that informed social anxiety about prostitution and which, in turn, helped shape state policy toward prostitution and prostitutes. Finally, I also try and describe, in necessarily fewer details, what some of the concerns of the prostitutes themselves might have been, and to sketch in very broad outlines what life in the brothel might have looked like.

dd5973805f2e381a1d373b924a2f2600
ebrary

The aims of this chapter are twofold: on the one hand to check how prostitution in nineteenth-century Egypt can be used as a lens from which to view state policy regarding such issues as public hygiene, morality and public security, and on the other to attempt to reconstruct the social space of an increasingly marginalised member of society: the prostitute. In an attempt to

dd5973805f2e381a1d373b924a2f2600
ebrary

accomplish the first aim I concentrate on the body of the prostitute and present it as a 'text' through which the policies of the state and the prejudices and/or phobias of the organised society behind it can be 'read'. At the same time and in an attempt to achieve the second aim, namely to reconstruct the social history of the prostitute, I focus on the brothel as a site in which the drama of her life could be gleamed.

Prostitution in Mehmed 'Ali's State

A good starting point from which to begin our inquiry is the decree passed in May 1834 banning prostitutes and public dancers from Cairo and banishing them to the south. From as early as the sixteenth century, both female and male public dancers who practised their business in Cairo were under the fiscal jurisdiction of a tax farm, 'the *muqâta'ah* of the *khurdah* ['lowly professions'], along with others involved in entertainment such as snake charmers, jugglers, and hashish sellers'.¹ Although there is some evidence that the 'entertainers' might have been organised in a guild (for example they marched in guild processions), it seems most likely that such guilds 'amounted to [little] more than a government-controlled administrative unit'.² Such control was needed mostly for tax reasons; but the fact that the *wali* (governor) of Cairo in the late eighteenth century kept a record of names of prostitutes together with those of known thieves and beggars³ suggests that the prostitutes were looked on with suspicion and were closely monitored by the state authorities.

This control occasionally lent itself to abuse, as we hear from the French invading authorities under Bonaparte who, in their attempt to stress their *mission civilisatrice*, typically reported how the *wali* was known to abuse his power occasionally by threatening to register a woman as a prostitute unless she paid him a bribe.⁴ It is important to note, however, that even without such abuse the mere fact that prostitutes had their names recorded in registers kept by the authorities made them prone to control and regulation by the state, a trend that was exacerbated throughout the nineteenth century. Thus, for example, just after their invasion and in the wake of the 1799

plague epidemic, the French military authorities banned all prostitutes (*al-nisa' al-mashhurat*) from entering Cairo on pain of death.⁵ More telling is the fact that it must have been more difficult to have one's name crossed out from such registers of *khurda*, or lowly occupations, than to have it added thereto. For example, when in 1833 a woman named Mahbuba petitioned the Department of Domestic/Civil Affairs (Diwan al-Khidiwi) to have her name lifted from the *khurda* register, the Diwan had to write to Radwan Agha, the *khurda* tax-farmer (*hurda mültezimi*) asking him to investigate when this women had joined this trade, what her original village was, to whom she 'belonged' (most probably a reference to a guarantor [*damin*] who could vouch for her conduct),⁶ where her dwelling was, and if she had owed any taxes to the government. Her name was only crossed out after precise answers were supplied to all these queries and after she had promised to pay 200 piastres as part of the previous year's taxes.⁷

As this case illustrates, the state's concern with, and monitoring of, prostitutes was not limited to the French authorities, but continued during the governorship of Mehmed 'Ali. It is known, for example, that the Pasha's government collected considerable taxes from public dancers, entertainers, magicians and musicians: Mengin says that such taxes amounted to 300 pounds in the 1821 budget, which showed a total revenue of 240,040 pounds, while Clot Bey says that in the 1833 budget, these taxes amounted to 60,000 francs out of a total revenue of 62,778,750 francs.⁸ While it is unclear if such figures included taxes on prostitution proper, it is difficult to imagine that Mehmed 'Ali's state machinery with its insatiable need for revenue and its ever-increasing efficiency and intrusiveness would have left this source of revenue untapped. Furthermore, it is known that after the invasion of Syria the Egyptian authorities did in fact collect taxes from taverns (*meyhaneler*) that proliferated in the different Syrian towns,⁹ and when it was suspected that some of the potential revenue was being spared, special officials were requested from Cairo to deal with the situation in a more efficient manner.¹⁰

If prostitution was a lucrative business, what then lay behind the 1834 decision to ban it from Cairo and to banish all public dancers and prostitutes to Upper Egypt?¹¹ A contemporary

British traveller, Bayle St John, who visited Egypt in 1850–1 opined that '[n]o motive of morality prompted' their banishment to Upper Egypt, which he adds was 'never effectually carried out' anyway. Instead, he argued that the reason behind the ban was the need to satisfy public opinion, which had become enraged by foreign tourists effectively monopolising the services of the 'dancing-girls':

As long as Muslim prejudice had free play [the public dancers] were left in the undisturbed exercise of their vocation; but when Mohammed Ali, for political purposes, found it necessary to repress the bigotry of his subjects, and even went as far as to bestow extraordinary and unjust privileges on Europeans, a very delicate question presented itself. It was bad enough to allow Christianity to quit the humble ass and ride upon horses; but when it came to meddle with, and almost monopolize the dancing-girls, the excitement and anger of the population was great.¹²

He added that it took 'constant collisions and quarrels' to force the reluctant authorities to reach a compromise by not banning prostitution altogether and, instead, to banish the public women to the south. In this account, and as is typical of many contemporary European, especially English, writers on Mehmed 'Ali, the Pasha comes across as far more liberal (read pro-European) than his subjects, and society is seen as essentially bigoted and duplicitous.

A more nuanced reasoning, perhaps, would see the public reaction against prostitutes as stemming not from concerns about morality or jealousy felt towards the increasing numbers of foreign tourists who had come to monopolise (presumably due to their better financial situation) the services of the public dancers, but as a reflection of a deeply felt resentment of the Pasha's policies in general. This is not the place to speak of the multiple reasons behind the public dissatisfaction with and, indeed, the widely felt hatred of Mehmed 'Ali's regime and his 'modernisation' policies.¹³ However, it is plausible to argue that instead of using force to express anger and frustration at the Pasha's numerous radical policies, hostile public opinion was often directed at one of the most vulnerable points of the Pasha's policies, namely the reputed tolerance towards Europeans, residents and tourists alike, and the relative ease

with which he allowed them to have 'fun' in his province. In other words, prostitutes bore the brunt of hostility that was directed not necessarily against themselves or their trade but at an explicitly European-accommodating policy of the Pasha.¹⁴

Another reason put forward for the 1834 banishment was mounting opposition from the ulama regarding what they saw as a licentious and immoral trade. Tucker, quoting contemporary authors (Edward W. Lane, P. N. Hamont and James A. St John), argues that, prompted by a case of the current tax farmer adding the name of an honourable woman to squeeze some money from her, the authorities finally had to succumb to pressure from religious scholars who saw taxes on vice – prostitution and public dancing – as immoral. Public protest, argues Tucker, 'led by the ulama, apparently convinced Muhammad 'Ali to ban all prostitution in Cairo, thereby assuaging public opinion and adding another feather to his cap of reform.'¹⁵

As convincing as these explanations may appear, there are various reasons for doubting the 'public-opinion' argument. For one thing Mehmed 'Ali was never very keen on assuaging the ulama or winning them over. Indeed, he could, and invariably did, disregard their opinion on various other occasions. It is significant to note, furthermore, that during the deliberations that were held in the Diwan al-Khidiwi concerning the abolition of the tax on public dancers and the banishment of prostitutes, there was a suggestion to apply the punishment stipulated in the sharia to prostitutes. Eventually, however, it was decided that women caught practising prostitution or public dancing in Cairo would be punished with 50 stripes for the first offence, and with one year's imprisonment with forced labour for repeated offences. Crucially, it was the civil administrators, not the shaykhs, who were to execute these punishments.¹⁶

Without dismissing the strength of the public-opinion argument I would suggest that Mehmed 'Ali and his authorities had more serious worries to be concerned with than assuaging the ulama or other hostile members among his 'bigoted' subjects. It was mostly the acute concerns about the health and discipline of the troops and students of his newly founded army and schools that prompted the Pasha to ban prostitution from

Cairo and from other cities in Lower Egypt, cities that by the early 1830s, and especially after the launching of the Syrian campaign in late 1831, had become centres of high troop concentration, and cities where most of the new schools had been opened.

Protecting the Military from Prostitutes

That prostitutes were considered a menace more to discipline and health than to morals and good manners is partly attested to by the fact that they were prohibited from practising their trade only in big cities and around the camps. In other words, had the ban been caused by concerns about public morals and common decency, it would have been more thoroughly applied throughout Egypt, and not only in Cairo and other main cities in the north. When Flaubert, for example, visited Egypt in 1849–50 he knew that no prostitutes could easily be found in Cairo, that they had moved on to Upper Egypt and that ‘good brothels no longer exist[ed] in Cairo’.¹⁷ As a sign that the ban was not diligently applied he did find the ‘soldiers’ prostitutes, who let themselves be taken...in exchange for a few paras’ along the aqueduct in Cairo.¹⁸ Furthermore, although it was generally understood that the ban did apply to Cairo and that prostitutes and *ghawazi* (the name reserved for public dancers, as opposed to the more ‘refined’ *awalim*) were free to pursue their trade in towns in Upper Egypt (especially Isna), the *mulids*, or saint’s days, of Tanta and Dissuq in the Delta were known to ‘abound ... in female entertainers’.¹⁹

As further evidence of the logic that informed the authorities’ concern about prostitution and other ‘indecent’ behaviour one can trace the policies applied regarding not brothels but taverns in the Syrian cities after their capture by Ibrahim Pasha’s troops in 1832–33.²⁰ As in Egyptian towns the authorities in Syria were acutely concerned about the discipline and health of the troops more than they were disturbed by affronts to public morality or common decency. For example, although there was a ban on opening or running taverns in urban centres, the ban was not categorical: it was only the taverns in close proximity to the camps that were ordered to be

shut down. When a foreigner opened a tavern near a mosque in Acre he was politely asked to close it down and to move it to the Frank quarter.²¹ This might have been due to the fact that he dared to open his tavern near a mosque. But the fact that he was still allowed to open it in the Frank quarter meant, however, that the authorities were not overly concerned with matters of public morality or decency. In any case, and as proof that Mehmed 'Ali's administration in Syria was not categorically so keen on prohibiting taverns, Sharif Pasha, the governor general of Syria, was ordered by the Pasha to compile a list of the revenue accrued by all taverns in the province, an order that clearly shows that taverns were tolerated there.²² Furthermore, one can glean more information about the reasons for banning taverns in Syrian towns in the 1830s by reading the correspondence between Mehmed 'Ali and his son, Ibrahim Pasha, regarding officers and men who solicited the services of prostitutes who could often be found there. Here both men come across as very harsh, not willing to tolerate any infraction of their ordinances that categorically prohibited soldiers from frequenting local taverns let alone brothels, or admitting any prostitutes on military premises. This was true both for European officers 'whoever they might be',²³ and for Turkish-speaking officers.²⁴ The different military manuals that were printed in the army press to organise various aspects of barracks life, furthermore, repeated this categorical ban on prostitutes in army premises.²⁵

As mentioned above, the main reason for banning prostitutes from areas with high troop concentrations was because of the threat that they were thought to cause to discipline. The 'public women' (*al-nisa' al-mashurat*, or *al-nisa' al-fawahish*) discovered on military premises were usually found with a liberal amount of liquor, with all that that entailed in terms of threat to the discipline of the troops and to public order. For example, when the coachman (*arabaci*) Dervish and the sapper (*baltaci*) Osman were punished by 75 and 150 lashes of the whip, respectively, it was due more to the disturbances they had caused after getting drunk than to the fact that they were caught in a brothel.²⁶ Many cases against the undisciplined behaviour of soldiers in Syrian cities cited soldiers getting drunk in the taverns and taking to the streets,

‘abusing the old and the young and the Christian population with no reason’.²⁷

More seriously, it was because prostitutes were believed to be the main vehicle for the spread of venereal diseases that there was such a categorical ban on any contact with the officers and their men. As in other countries, Mehmed ‘Ali’s army showed signs of the all-too-typical vicious circle that all armies from the late fifteenth century onward fell into: by isolating men from their families (a measure which was necessitated, in turn, by concerns about discipline as much as by concerns that the soldiers were likely to succumb to destitution by sharing their meagre rations with their families), men had little option but to frequent prostitutes, which increased the possibility of catching venereal diseases.²⁸ At the same time, the military’s demand for conscripts, by depriving families of their primary bread-winner, pushed many women into prostitution.

As a result of this massive dislocation of local communities and disruption of family life, there was a high rise in prostitution accompanied by a high incidence of syphilis. Four years after the beginning of systematic conscription it was realised that syphilis was on the rise and that medical experts were needed to deal with what already must have appeared an epidemic. The problem reached near-crisis proportions immediately after the launching of the Syrian campaign in the winter of 1831 when the field hospitals in Syria could not deal with the large numbers of syphilitic soldiers,²⁹ and Clot Bey, the chief physician of the army, had to write a special treatise on the subject.³⁰ Translated into Arabic and printed by the army press, the treatise took the form of a personal letter from the chief physician of the army to each regimental doctor. It started by saying that ‘it has lately been reported that a large number of soldiers had been afflicted with scabies and syphilis, which are highly contagious. It is feared that if no strong and effective measures are taken, they will spread even further.’³¹ The treatise went on to give the following orders to the army doctors:

On receiving this letter you must have an examination of all the men whose health you are required to look after, officers, NCOs and soldiers alike. Those afflicted with [syphilis or scabies] have to be set aside, and particular care has to be given to the syphilitic.

You have to check their genitalia, their anuses and their mouths for signs of the disease. This examination is to be conducted once every week.³²

The treatise proceeded to tell the regimental doctors how precisely to examine the bodies of the soldiers, how to prepare a special ointment for treatment, and finally how to apply this ointment on the soldiers' genitalia.³³

However useful Clot Bey's treatise might have been in helping the young medical officers to diagnose and treat syphilis, the authorities felt that the main problem lay in failing to prevent the spread of the disease in the first place. We have already seen the attempts to prevent soldiers from having access to prostitutes. But less than two years into the Syrian campaign, and after realising that there was no end to the war in sight, the men, having been prevented from soliciting the services of prostitutes, started to grumble so strongly that 'in order to counteract the feeling of despondency as far as possible, the wives, concubines, and parents of the conscripts have been allowed to accompany them'.³⁴ Allowing women to join their husbands in Syria might have placated the soldiers and helped to stem the possibility of mutiny; however, it created serious hygienic problems by facilitating the spread of a wide range of diseases in the army.

What is clear from this short excursion into military affairs is that behind Clot Bey's concern about prostitutes (and women in general) was his realisation that they were the main reason for the spread of syphilis, a disease that took a long time to be cured, which, in turn, necessitated the removal of a considerable number of men from active duty. Before proceeding with some further elaborations on the chief physician's position regarding prostitution it might be useful to note that he shared the opinion of many of his compatriots, and indeed of many Europeans, of the essentially sexualised nature of 'orientals'. Thus while in his 'scientific' treatise mentioned above he approaches the subject in an 'objective', detached manner, in his published book intended for a French audience he did not hide his indignation at what he considered to be the free and dangerous sexuality that somehow characterised Egyptian society. There he opined that syphilis was widespread in Egypt

either because of the high rise in the rate of divorce (that is because of Islam) or due to the 'voluptuous temperament of Egyptian women' (which presumably was due to the hot weather).³⁵ This was an opinion that was shared by other French observers of the prostitution scene in Egypt.³⁶ In a similar vein, a British doctor working for the Egyptian government at the end of the nineteenth century noticed that the 'Egyptian native has less shame than a European patient in confessing to syphilis', and remarked with typical Victorian disgust that syphilis was as widespread in Egypt as influenza was in England.³⁷ Rather than attributing the spread of syphilis only to prostitution, he believed it to be the result of 'promiscuous aggregation of the people and to the facility of divorce'.³⁸

As concerned as Clot Bey was regarding the health condition of the army, he found the situation in the military schools in Cairo even more alarming. Reports reaching him suggested that syphilis had spread alarmingly among the student population.³⁹ After arguing with officials from the Schools Department as to the scale and cause of the problem, he became convinced that the problem was so widespread that 'if you conduct a regular check-up, you will find that most of the students are afflicted', and that undoubtedly the spread of venereal diseases in state schools was a result of the students' 'lack of good behaviour (*'adam wujud adab*) and their committing untoward acts (*if'al al-umur al-ghayr layiqa*)'.⁴⁰ Ultimately he pontificated on what he judged to be the root of the problem:

Unlike Europe, prostitutes [*al-nisa' al-fawahish*] are not required to present themselves for medical examination. [Accordingly,] one such woman is enough to infect one hundred men. Since we have established clinics and hospitals in the provinces, [he suggested,] it will be a great move if we force these women to be treated there. This is how European countries have managed to control syphilis, which is graver and more dangerous than the plague. In my opinion there should be no obstacle to forcing these women to report to the hospitals, given the fact that they have no sense of propriety in shamelessly practising prostitution and adultery. [Accordingly,] they will have no shame in allowing themselves to be examined regularly. Furthermore, by forcing them [to be medically examined] we will be committing an act of charity since we will be

helping in curing them as well as protecting [the health] of the populace [*hifz siyanat al-ahali*]. If they refuse, [then we can force them] to change their profession. This is one of the most important matters regarding health, and I urge you [Diwan Khidiwi] to pay considerable attention to it since examining these women is far better than banning them [from their trade]. This is so because these women are an essential link in preserving the health of the free women [*al-nisa' al-ahrar*]. Moreover, not banning them [but at the same time examining them] is far better than [allowing the men] to replace them with a much greater vice that is against human nature, by which we mean those young boys who, with the pretext of [public] dancing, commit what is too improper even to be uttered.⁴¹

dd5973805f2e381a1d373b924a2f2600
 ebrary

Here we have as clear a picture as one can get about Clot Bey's position regarding prostitutes: they alone were responsible for spreading syphilis. Moreover, he held them responsible for infecting the 'free women', since one prostitute could easily infect 100 men, and these, in turn, would infect their wives. Clot Bey was confident of the effectiveness of the network of clinics and hospitals that had been founded throughout Egypt, but sensed at the same time that by admitting prostitutes to these medical centres the health authorities might attract the wrath of conservative circles. Clot Bey argued that admitting prostitutes to state hospitals would, in effect, be the lesser of two evils, since not monitoring prostitutes medically would cause the authorities to lose the battle against syphilis. Notwithstanding Clot Bey's impassioned arguments, neither the archival record nor travellers' reports provide any evidence that prostitutes were subjected to regular medical checkups. It was only after the British occupation in 1882 that prostitutes were required to present themselves for a weekly medical examination and to carry their medical certificates on them at all times showing the result of the last test.⁴²

dd5973805f2e381a1d373b924a2f2600
 ebrary

So far I have been arguing that the authorities' concern about prostitution was informed by anxieties about the health of students in public schools and the soldiers in army camps and barracks. Interestingly, the only two incidents in which Clot Bey mentioned morals was when he lamented that the 'voluptuous nature of Egyptian women' was somehow responsible for the high incidence of syphilis, and in his

dd5973805f2e381a1d373b924a2f2600
 ebrary

warning that in the absence of systematic medical checks on public women, men would have to resort to other alternatives and 'commit what is too improper even to be uttered'. It is interesting to note that back in the French metropole, the medical authorities were equally concerned about the link between prostitution and homosexuality.⁴³ Clearly Clot Bey's anxieties reflected broader concerns of his time.

Al-nas al-ahrar and al-nas al-ashrar

By stressing the fact that what lay behind the anxiety Clot Bey and others in the medical establishment felt towards prostitution was not their concern about vice but their anxiety about the spread of venereal disease the aim is not to dismiss the entire 'morality argument'. Rather, the point is to realise that very often when prostitutes were targeted as an affront to morals there was something else that loomed in the background. As we have seen, Clot Bey's low opinion of prostitutes can be traced to the serious health hazard he believed they posed. Similarly opinions voiced by other state agencies, most notably the police, as well as occasional voices heard from members of the emerging middle class regarding prostitution, reveal that what was at issue was not the practice or immorality of prostitution so much as the conditions regulating and managing the prostitute's trade. In this respect the brothel gradually replaced the prostitute's body as a site around which discourses and practices proliferated. Let us read closely one of the few petitions preserved in the Egyptian National Archives complaining about prostitution in Cairo. In 1892, 21 residents of the Darb al-Mahabil quarter in 'Abdin complained to the Cairo governorate that a certain Hasan Sibayka had rented his house in the same neighbourhood (*hara*) to a European who, in turn, had turned it into a brothel (*karakhana*). The petitioners, all of them Muslims, were specifically complaining that given the brothel's 'proximity to the houses of free people (*manazil al-ahrar*), this would be a violation of honour and the faith (*mukhill bi'l-sharaf wa'l-diyana*)'. However, the petition immediately goes on to add an important qualification:

As your excellencies well know, such places [i.e. brothels] are gathering places of evil people (*majma' li'l-nas al-ashrar*) and since it is likely that acts that constitute a danger to security and tranquillity emanate [from these places], we have dared to present this petition requesting that this man be forced to move to another dwelling.⁴⁴

Before elaborating on the use of these curious terms, *al-nas al-ahrar* and *al-nas al-ashrar*, lit. 'free people' and 'evil people', it should be noted that by the time this petition had been written, in 1892, prostitution in Cairo seems to have been reserved to certain areas similar to the Parisian *quartiers réservés*, and that it was illegal to open brothels outside such quarters. From as early as the 1830s, Azbakiyya (more specifically Wishsh al-Birka), was the area best known for its coffee shops, brothels and taverns,⁴⁵ and by the 1880s, ironically, it was Clot Bey Street, to the north of Azbakiyya, which had become Cairo's most promiscuous red-light district.⁴⁶ As further evidence that what was at issue in this petition was not a principled objection to the practice of prostitution, but rather what was regarded as infringements to 'zoning' laws, we can read the following circular issued by the Ministry of Interior in 1893 to all governorates in Egypt.

The Ministry of Interior [Dakhiliyya] has often received complaints from the populace of some urban centres [*ahali ba'd al-mudun wa'l-banadir wa'l-buldan*] of prostitutes taking up residence in places that are in close proximity to the residences of families and free people [*al-ahrar*]. [The petitions complained that this practice] contravenes morality [*al-adab*] and violates the tranquillity of the populace. In addition, some prostitutes have been in the habit of walking promiscuously [*mutahattikat*] down the streets with no decency or respect. And since these two matters constitute a violation to public morality in addition to being a cause of numerous complaints, it has become necessary to put an end to them...[by] forbidding prostitutes from taking up residence among the dwellings of al-ahrar, and designating a special area for their residence away from other houses; and they have to be warned not to frequent public thoroughfares in an indecent manner.⁴⁷

In other words, the petitioners were not complaining about the fact that prostitutes were allowed to conduct their 'trade', but

they were allowed to do so in close proximity to 'respectable' residential houses.

That it was more the brothel as a site for the prostitute's licentious trade than the prostitute's body and morals that was the source of indignation from the authorities becomes clearer when we analyse the meanings and connotations of the two terms mentioned above, *al-nas al-ahrar* and *al-nas al-ashrar*. Before the term 'society' had become widely used and before the term 'nation' had established its ubiquitous presence, *al-nas al-ahrar* was the term often encountered in contemporary documents to refer to dominant classes, classes that would later appropriate the terms 'society' and 'nation' for their own interests. It was not strange, therefore, for Clot Bey in 1847 or for the Muslim residents of Darb al-Mahabil half a century later to use this term to refer to the class whose lifestyle and/or welfare were judged to be most seriously threatened by prostitutes. Nor was it odd for these members of the 'upper classes' to refer to prostitutes as 'evil people', *nas ashrrar*.

It thus appears that both terms belonged together in one ethical universe, if occupying two extreme ends of the same moral spectrum. In other words, it appears at first sight that the moral criteria that were used to judge some people as *ahrrar*, were the same as those used to refer to others as *ashrrar*. Accordingly, referring to prostitutes as 'evil people' seems to bring us back to the 'public opinion' argument whereby the 1834 decree banning prostitution in Cairo and subsequent government policies, as well as public reaction to prostitutes, are explained by resorting to a certain moral standard that informed the policies of the state and the attitudes of *ahrrar* members of society. Nevertheless, by tracing the origins of the term '*al-nas al-ashrrar*' in nineteenth-century legal parlance one senses a different usage, one that stresses the 'danger' rather than 'immoral' connotations of the term 'evil'.

The first explicit use of the term in Egyptian legislation of the nineteenth century was in al-Qanun al-Sultani of 1852, which was a revision of the Ottoman Penal Code of 1850. Article 13 of chapter 3 of this law stated:

The group of evil doers [*zumrat al-ashrrar*], that is, those who appear different [*alladhi tazhar mughayrathum*] in some aspects, if their situation is such that it results in the withdrawal of peace [*salb*

al-amn] from the populace, if any one of the said people is arraigned, he should be exiled/imprisoned with iron shackles for a year. If during this period he shows rectitude, improves his conduct, causes no more harm, and brings forward someone from the populace who can vouch for him [*damin*], then he should be released. Otherwise, the period [of imprisonment] should be extended until such time as his rectitude becomes obvious, and his conduct improves.⁴⁸

As could be seen in this article, the term '*ashrar*' was used specifically in the law to refer to dangerous or seditious acts, not immoral ones. Significantly, when used to refer to prostitutes, it was the prostitute's perceived threat to urban security and public order more than her challenge to morals that was usually intended whenever the term was used. This could be corroborated by an examination of how this particular article of the main penal code was used and how it was interpreted by the legal authorities in various cases involving prostitutes. By closely reading some of the legal cases that were brought before different legal bodies in Egypt during the period prior to the British occupation this point may be further elucidated.

One such case was reviewed by the Cairo police in 1858. It started when a report was received stating that a two-year-old infant had been found abandoned in the cemeteries in Bulaq. After lengthy investigations, her mother was found, and turned out to be a certain, 'Aysha bint Hasan al-Sayfi, a prostitute from Bulaq. She said that her husband had deserted her three years earlier, and that she had been struggling to raise the child on her own and that eventually 'the devil seduced her to leave her daughter in the cemeteries in the hope that someone picks her up and raises her properly'.⁴⁹ The highest court (Majlis al-Ahkam) decided to convict 'Aysha according to article 13 of chapter 3 of al-Qanun al-Sultani, and sentenced her to one year's imprisonment in the *iplikhane*, the main women's prison in Cairo. The reason given was not that 'Aysha was practising prostitution, but that 'she had attempted to kill (*i'dam*) her own daughter, and it was therefore not inconceivable that she might do the same to a stranger (*ma' al-ajanib*).'⁵⁰

Another incident also involving prostitutes took place on the night of 17 May 1877 in Alexandria, when a French guard

named Girard went to a brothel owned by a prostitute called Umm al-Sa'd in al-Tartushi quarter. After taking his pleasure, he discovered that his purse had gone missing with a sum of 64 francs. He reported the theft to the police, who immediately arrested Umm al-Sa'd. She confessed to having stolen the money from one of her prostitutes, a *maqtura* (a prostitute working in a house owned by an 'ayqa, or 'madame') called Shafiqah bint Sha'ban, and then distributed it among the police detectives, soldiers and guards, presumably as a bribe. The Alexandria police found her guilty 'of turning her brothel into a refuge to evildoers and thieves (*ma'wa li'l-ashrar wa'l-lusus*), and since Umm al-Sa'd was found to have had a criminal record... and since the presence of people like her results in thefts and concern for the police, we suggest...banning [her] from this town as a deterrent to others...'.⁵¹

A more telling case, in which the reason for police concern about prostitution and brothels is explicitly spelled out, involved a Prussian woman called Bella Christina who owned a coffee-shop-cum-tavern in al-Raml district in Alexandria. By the time of this case, 1855, al-Raml had still not been incorporated within Alexandria proper, and lay outside the confines of the city. Late one night when Christina was about to close her shop, a group of European customers called in for a round of drinks. When she turned them down, saying it was too late, a fight broke out which ended up in the police station. The different parties reached an amicable settlement and Christina decided not to press charges. However, the Alexandria governorate wrote to the police headquarters to check if Christina had a permit to open a tavern in such a place and also to check if she had a criminal record. It transpired that five years earlier Christina had been involved in a similar incident and that there had been an earlier order to exile her to her country 'since she is a prostitute who causes problems (*li-kawniha min al-fawahish wa hasil minha mafasid*)...and since she had had various Europeans and Greeks who were evildoers (*jumlat unas ifrink wa arwam min al-ashrar*)...in her place'. After checking her detailed criminal record the Alexandria police suggested to the governorate that this time she should be exiled and her tavern should be closed down, explaining that 'the presence in a remote area such as al-Raml of coffee shops and

taverns where women and [alcoholic] drinks mix necessarily results in troubles'.⁵²

Before having a close look at the brothel to see why specifically it was seen as an 'evil' place, let us analyse one last case that illustrates clearly the fact that it was security rather than morality that was the prime concern of the police in dealing with prostitution. This was the case of nine prostitutes who had been exiled to Isna in Upper Egypt some time in the early 1860s. After spending several years in exile in a town where they presumably could not practice their trade in any significant manner, they wrote a petition to Khedive Ismail in person complaining of their conditions in exile.

We, the presenters of this petition, are women among your slaves who have been exiled to Isna. We hereby complain, Your Excellency, that it has been several years now since we have been banished to the above-mentioned place. [And since] we are widows with no-one to support us and have no source of income [*'adimin al-wali wa'l-qut*], and since it has become widely known that our Lord [the Khedive], the Benefactor, God prolong his life, has bestowed his amnesty and forgiveness on all criminals (*arbab al-jinayat*) as well as those who have been accused, and since your slaves are poor and destitute women with no [hope] except the amnesty of your Lordship, and since we have been forgotten [in these remote areas] with no-one to inquire about us, and since poor people like us must, for sure, be among those who are included in the amnesty of your Excellency, we hereby request from our Master that he look upon us with mercy and forgiveness... and we, our Lord, are nine souls who have no hope except the forgiveness of your majesty.⁵³

As was usual with such cases, the petition was forwarded to the Minister of Interior, who, in turn, forwarded it to the responsible official, in this case the Governor of Isna, who opened an inquiry into the subject of the petition. After lengthy investigations it turned out that most of these women had been implicated in different criminal cases that ranged from brawls in the brothels they had been working in to numerous thefts, and it also transpired that a number of them had quite extensive criminal records and had even been sent to prison several times. In other words, although one of the reasons mentioned for banishing the nine prostitutes to Isna was to

prevent them from practising 'untoward acts' ('*adam dawaranha 'ala al-umur al-mughayra*') in Cairo, it was clear that it was mostly their involvement in petty crimes in their brothels that eventually caused their exile.

The 'Evil' Brothel

There is therefore strong evidence to suggest that it was the body of the prostitute as an infested site threatening the health of society in addition to the brothel as a source of danger to urban security that were the target of concern, legislation and anxiety in pre-1882 Egypt. Aside from all of the associated public disorders, what in particular made brothels the source of such anxiety and concern to the police? Let us look at some further police cases to find out more about life in Egyptian brothels.

Alcohol seems to have been behind many of the problems that happened in brothels, not only because men often lost their mind by drinking but because they lost their money too. This was the case, for example, of Yusuf Sulayman, a Jewish cotton merchant who went to the *karakhana* of 'the prostitute, Mariyam bint Jirjis, the Copt' in the early evening of 27 December 1877. After having sex with Habiba al-Turkumaniyya, a *maqtura* working there, he dozed off for a while, only to wake up feeling a hand in his pocket. He opened his eyes to find Habiba holding his purse and handing it to Mariyam – or so he claimed in his official complaint to the police. Both Mariyam and Habiba, however, denied the charges and insisted that Yusuf was already completely drunk when he passed by the brothel asking to have sex with Habiba. It was only after she had refused to do so that he got mad and later accused Habiba and Mariyam of stealing his purse. The lengthy police investigations that ensued hinted at the possibility of one of the prostitutes stealing Yusuf's purse while he was drunk asleep in order to pay a debt that she had owed Mariyam, an old debt which had prevented her from leaving that brothel and seeking service in another place.⁵⁴

Yusuf's alleged fate at the hand of Habiba and Mariyam seems similar to what Hammuda al-Jazzar claimed to have

encountered early one evening on his way home after finishing work. While passing in front of the brothel owned by Hasna bint Muhammed, he found himself literally being dragged inside, his walking stick snatched from him, and he himself being forced to drink alcohol until he passed out. When he awoke the following morning, he found that his purse with 500 piastres in it had gone missing. Hasna responded to the charges by saying that alcohol was to blame: she got so drunk with Hammuda that she found herself stealing his purse. It was, again, alcohol that caused her to forget that she had hid the purse under the mattress and to deny ever having stolen it when first faced with the charges by the police.⁵⁵

Not all alcohol-related troubles taking place in brothels were so benign. Occasionally the (presumably *ahrar*) brothel-frequenters, instead of having fun in their nocturnal outings, ended up meeting a tragic fate. Thus when the 21-year-old Husayn Abu al-Aynayn accompanied his friend, 'Abd al-Rahman Effendi, to have sex (*li-fi'l al-fahisha*) in a certain brothel he had no idea that this would prove his last outing. He died the following morning, apparently from an overdose of alcohol and drugs.⁵⁶ Similarly, the Copt Jirjis the jeweller, who went to have sex in a brothel in Azbakiyya could not imagine that instead of a good time he would be beaten by the prostitutes, robbed of his money, his watch and his jewellery and then put on a donkey, sent home completely drunk, only to be found dead the following morning of alcohol poisoning.⁵⁷

dd5973805f2e381a1d373b924a2f2600
 ebrary
 Lastly, there were two other sources of problems frequently encountered in brothels: pimping and gambling. Although European travellers often mentioned pimps as part of the prostitution scene of the early nineteenth century, typically describing prostitutes as married to men who acted as their servants, musicians and pimps,⁵⁸ it seems likely, as van Nieuwkerk comments, that this was one of the sensational descriptions of what was already an exotic scene. It seems more plausible, in the light of the fact that such descriptions were 'an inversion of the usual mode of living among Egyptians',⁵⁹ that they were not very truthful. A more nuanced picture presented by Tucker depicts the appearance of pimps and the prostitutes' relative loss of autonomy as a factor of state intervention: as long as prostitution was unregulated and the state was interfering

minimally in the profession, prostitutes seem to have had a large say in how they practised their profession and how they earned and spent their money. When state intervention increased, either through the famous ban of 1834 or through the later mechanisms of the 'absolutist and colonial state apparatus' in the latter part of the century, 'a shadowy network of pimps and procurers... [developed, which] represented an effective, if sometimes unpleasant and dangerous, form of protection from state intrusion'.⁶⁰

The archival evidence seems to corroborate Tucker's insight: there are very few police cases from the early part of the nineteenth century that refer to pimps. This may be more a reflection of the relatively poor police records from that period compared to later in the century than of the lack of pimps controlling and interfering in prostitutes' lives as such. Starting from the 1850s, we start coming across police cases that mention trouble between pimps and prostitutes. In 1858, for example, a man from Tanta, 'Amir Abu al-Zuqqa, accused a woman called al-Alifa and two men of breaking into his house and stealing his money. When the police checked his house, however, they found that a chest with a considerable amount of money and some clothes was left behind, and so they started suspecting 'Amir's story. It turned out that 'Amir was running a brothel, that al-Alifa had been working for him and that she had recently started working for two other men instead. He thus filed a false accusation of theft since his business was adversely affected by her deserting him (*min taba'ud al-hurma... 'anhu yahsul lahu 'utl fi ma'ashihi*). The case was first reviewed by the civil authorities (*mudiriyya*) and then by the local court, Majlis Tanta, and eventually by Majlis al-Ahkam, the supreme legal body in the land. Its verdict is interesting enough to warrant quoting it in full. After approving the lower Majlis's verdict that he should be imprisoned according to article 2 of chapter 2 of al-Qanun al-Sultani,⁶¹ and after reasoning that the famous *ashrar* article is more relevant, the high court decided:

Since the claimant had turned his place of dwelling into a brothel (*ma'wa lil-fawahish*), and since it is known that such places harbour no-one but evildoers (*al-nas al-ashirra*), and given that the only possible outcome if two or more people get together [in such places] is to have a fight over prostitutes, and given that such a

situation can only lead to a withdrawal of public security, and since it has been proven that the claimant was the cause of all this due to his opening such a house, [given all of the above] he should be punished with one year's hard labour in the railway workshops (*al-waburat wa'l-'amaliyyat*).⁶²

In another case that took place three years later, in 1861, the tension between prostitute and pimp (with the help of some alcohol) resulted in murder. This was the case of a slave called Surur who appeared to be the pimp of Hasna, a prostitute who used to work in a *karakhana* owned and run by a madame called Nafisa and her husband, Hasan al-Tahhan. One evening in April 1861, word reached Surur, who was having a drink or two in a nearby tavern, that his concubine (*rafiqatahu*) had been offering her services to an unnamed Copt, apparently without Surur's consent. When she ran into Surur that afternoon in front of the mosque of al-Shaykh al-'Ajami, Hasna did not deny the fact, and added that this was none of his business and that the Copt 'could buy two slaves like you'. At that Surur lost his temper and lifted Hasna by the neck until she dropped dead. Realising that she had stopped breathing, Surur and another man, Faraj 'Ammar, who used to work in a neighbouring café, then carried the body in full view of the public (*'ala ru'us al-ashhad*, as the police commissioner said 'in his amazement') until they reached Nafisa's brothel.

dd5973805f2e381a1d373b924a2f2600
 ebrary
 Alarmed at her prostitute's miserable state and Surur's pathetic behaviour, Nafisa ordered him to get out of her place at once. When he refused, she summoned the police, who came immediately and took Surur to the nearby police station. After a lengthy police investigation and an autopsy report that specified asphyxiation as the cause of death, Surur was sentenced to prison with hard labour for one year, according to the famous *ashrar* article. Nafisa and her husband, furthermore, were also found guilty of admitting Surur into their brothel carrying a dead body.⁶³

Besides the often lethal combination of pimping and drinking, brothels were also considered dangerous places because patrons often used them for gambling, with all-too-familiar scenes of men losing their temper after losing their money. Again, the police records show numerous such cases. For example, in April 1864 Christo Nicola, a Greek but under

the jurisdiction of the khedival government, entered the house of a prostitute called Nafisa bint Yusuf to 'commit the untoward act' (*bi-qasd al-umur al-ghayr layiqa*). They then gambled together and after he had left, Nafisa discovered that he had stolen some money from her.⁶⁴ Indeed, the police was receiving reports of serious fights and brawls involving gambling in brothels, taverns and coffee houses⁶⁵ with such regularity that gambling was eventually banned in 1865.⁶⁶

It thus appears that brothels constituted a source of alarm and concern for the Egyptian authorities in the 1850s and 1860s. After the large army that Mehmed 'Ali created had been disbanded in the early 1840s, and after the medical threat that prostitutes posed to the troops in their camps had receded, the medical and legal authorities in urban centres shifted their concern from the prostitute's body to the brothels as a source of sedition, danger and infestation. The brothels, with their 'evil' residents, were increasingly seen as a threat to the peace and tranquillity of urban centres, and they were gradually being looked upon as endangering the lifestyle of *ahrar* members of society. During the British occupation, brothels were brought under closer government scrutiny and prostitutes were subjected to vigilant medical supervision, thus attenuating the imminent danger that brothels had hitherto posed to society. Nevertheless, not satisfied with this 'progress', society finally managed to 'free' itself of prostitution altogether, and in 1949 its *ahrar* members finally triumphed in passing a decree criminalising all forms of prostitution, thus bringing to an end a distinct chapter in the history of Egyptian society.

Notes on Chapter 4

- 1 Judith Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge, 1984) pp. 150–1.
- 2 *Ibid.* p. 151.
- 3 Andre Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, vol. 2 (Damascus, 1973–4) p. 609.
- 4 Les Archives de la guerre, Vincennes, France, MR (Memoires historiques), file 543, Degua, 'Notes sur l'Egypte', quoted in Tucker, *Women* pp. 151, 228 n. 85.

- 5 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-Athar fi'l-Tarajim wa'l-Akhbar* (Cairo, 1297/1880) vol. 3 p. 57.
- 6 On the system of daman see Ehud Toledano, *State and Society in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge, 1990) pp. 161, 199.
- 7 Egyptian National Archives (*Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya*, hereafter DWQ; note that the Arabic letters *sin* and *lam* used in the classing of documents have been rendered S and L, respectively) Register S/2/40/23, *Diwan al-Khidiwi*, 777 (old) p. 127, doc. 112, 4 Safar 1249/23 June 1833.
- 8 Karin van Nieuwkerk, *'A Trade Like Any Other': Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt* (Cairo, 1996) p. 196 n. 21.
- 9 DWQ, S/5/47/1, *Sijillat 'Abdin*, doc. 124, 7 Dhu al-Hijja 1249/17 April 1834.
- 10 DWQ, *Sham*, box 20, doc. 511, 25 Dhu al-Hijja 1250/24 April 1835.
- 11 For a summary of the possible reasons behind the ban see van Nieuwkerk, *A Trade Like Any Other* pp. 31–2.
- 12 Bayle St John, *Village Life in Egypt*, vol. 1 (London, 1852) pp. 28–9.
- 13 For a brief review of public resentment towards the regime in the 1820s and 1830s, see Khaled Fahmy, 'The era of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha', in Martin Daly (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1998) pp. 155–6, 168–70.
- 14 A similar reaction was directed against the newly trained midwives, attacked by religious scholars who rightly considered midwives the weakest link in a medico-legal establishment that increasingly marginalised the religious establishment's position in society; see Khaled Fahmy, 'Women, Medicine and Power in Nineteenth-century Egypt', in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton NJ, 1998) pp. 52–4.
- 15 Tucker, *Women* p. 152.
- 16 See note 7 above. On the relationship between sharia and the non-sharia penal system see Khaled Fahmy, 'Law, Medicine and Society in Nineteenth-century Egypt', *Egypte/Monde Arabe*, no 34 (1998) pp. 38–42, and *idem.*, 'The Police and the People in Nineteenth-century Egypt', *Die Welt des Islams* 39, 3 (1999) pp. 361–74.
- 17 Gustave Flaubert, *Flaubert in Egypt, A Sensibility on Tour*, Francis Steegmuller (trans. and ed.) (Chicago IL, 1979) p. 83.
- 18 *Ibid.* p. 76. Clot Bey says that in spite of the public ban, prostitutes still practised in Cairo, albeit in hiding: *Aperçu général sur l'Egypte*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1840) p. 336.
- 19 Van Nieuwkerk, *A Trade Like Any Other* p. 32.
- 20 The records of both the police of Cairo, *Zabtiyyat Misr*, and various law courts – most importantly Majlis al-Ahkam, the highest court

- in the land – which date from a slightly later period in the nineteenth century show that the authorities often equated taverns and coffee shops run by women with brothels; see, for example, the 1858 case of a woman who ran such a tavern-cum-brothel (*karakhana*) in Qara Maydan just outside Cairo: DWQ, Register S/7/10/2, *Majlis al-Ahkam*, 664 (old), case no 16, 3 Safar 1275/12 September 1858.
- 21 DWQ, *Sham*, box 8, doc. 184, 28 Muharram 1248/27 June, 1832.
- 22 See notes 9 and 10 above.
- 23 DWQ, *Ma'yya Saniyya*, Register S/1/48/4, doc. 594, 20 Jumada I 1250/24 September 1834. This was a case of two European officers, a pharmacist and a cartographer, who had 'a dancer and a singer' in their tents at night. The Pasha's language in this letter is particularly harsh and categorical in forbidding prostitutes from living near army camps.
- 24 DWQ, *Awamir li'l-Jihadiyya*, box 1, doc. 10, 6 Safar 1246/27 July 1830. This was a case of a certain Osman Agha who had taken a 24-hour leave but came back five days later. On investigating the matter he was discovered to have spent his time in a brothel. He was expelled from service altogether.
- 25 See, for example, *Qanun al-Dakhiliyya* (*Regulations for Barracks and Camps*) (Cairo, 1834–5), art. 273 p. 52.
- 26 DWQ, *Sham*, box 3, doc. 119, 16 Sha'ban 1247/20 January 1832.
- 27 DWQ, *Sham*, box 9, doc. 116, 20 Safar 1248/19 July 1832; and DWQ, *Sham*, box 8, doc. 130, 20 Muharram 1248/19 June 1832.
- 28 For the connection between syphilis, prostitution and armies, see Claude Quétel, *History of Syphilis*, Judith Braddock and Brian Pike (trans.) (Baltimore, 1990) pp. 228–33. For the logic of such isolation in the case of Mehmed 'Ali's army, see Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men; Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge, 1997) pp. 119–22.
- 29 For how the military authorities dealt with this crisis, see Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men* pp. 214–26.
- 30 Antoine B. Clot Bey, *Risala min Mashurat al-Sihha ila Hukama' al-Jihadiyya* (*A Treatise from the Health Council to the Physicians of the Army*) (Cairo, 1835).
- 31 Clot Bey, *Risala* p. 1.
- 32 *Ibid.* p. 2.
- 33 *Ibid.*, articles 3–8 pp. 2–5.
- 34 Sir John Bowring, 'Report on Egypt and Candia', *Parliamentary Papers, Reports from Commissioners*, 21(1840) p. 6. The request of the soldiers to have their families brought to Syria was relayed to the Pasha in Cairo in DWQ, Register S/1/48/4, *Ma'yya Saniyya*,

- doc. 25, 2 Jumada I 1249/17 September 1833; his consent is in DWQ, Register S/1/48/4, *Ma'yya Saniyya*, doc. 255, 15 Jumadi I 1249/30 September 1833.
- 35 Clot, *Aperçu général*, vol. 1 p. 336.
- 36 See, for example, M.G. Nicole, 'La prostitution en Egypte', *Annales d'hygiène publique*, 2me ser., 50 (1878) p. 214.
- 37 F.C. Madden, 'Syphilis in Egypt', *Records of the Egyptian Government School of Medicine* 1 (1901) p. 208.
- 38 *Ibid.* p. 207.
- 39 DWQ, *Diwan al-Fihadiyya*, Register 437, doc. 189 p. 182, 17 Jumada II 1263/2 June 1847.
- 40 DWQ, *Diwan al-Fihadiyya*, Register 437, doc. 212 p. 195, 4 Rajab 1263/18 July 1847.
- 41 DWQ, *Diwan al-Fihadiyya*, Register 437, doc. 143 p. 169, 7 Jumada II 1263/23 May 1847.
- 42 Ministry of Interior Ordinance dated 11 November, 1882; quoted in Filib Jallad (ed.), *Qamus al-Idara wa al-Qada'* (*Dictionary of Administration and Justice*), 4 vols, vol. 3 (Alexandria, 1890-2) p. 1217.
- 43 Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste Parent-Duchâtelet, the pioneering physician and social anthropologist, devoted his life to the study of Paris prostitutes and sewers; see his 'Essai sur la cloaque ou égouts de la ville de Paris', in *Hygiène publique*, 2 vols (Paris, 1836), and *De la prostitution dans la ville de Paris*, 2 vols (Paris, 1836). The two phenomena were believed to be intricately linked; see the lucid analysis by Donald Reid, *Paris Sewers and Sewermen: Realities and Representations* (Cambridge MA, 1991) pp. 23ff. See also Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France After 1850*, Alan Sheridan (trans.) (Cambridge MA, 1990).
- 44 DWQ, *Muhafazat Misr, Mukatabat Ifrinki*, box with no title or number, but with '1892' written on it, petition to *Qalam al-Zabt wa'l-Rabt* in *Diwan al-Dakhiliyya*, 31 March 1892.
- 45 'Ali Mubarak claimed that Azbakiyya had 23 per cent of the coffee-shops and 46 per cent of the taverns (*khammarat*) of all ten 'eighths' (*thumn*) or quarters of Cairo: 'Ali Mubarak, *al-Khitat al-Tawfiqiyya al-Jadida*, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1888) p. 95.
- 46 On promiscuous Azbakiyya and Clot Bey Street, see Muhammad Sayyid al-Kilani, *Fi Rubu' al-Azbakiyya* (Cairo, 1985) pp. 89-108, and the very engaging and vivid description given by van Nieuwkerk, *A Trade Like Any Other* pp. 45ff.
- 47 DWQ, *Muhafazat al-'Arish*, Register L/10/30/1, 111 (old), letter no 90 pp. 20 and 24, 2 Rabi' II 1311/12 October 1893.

- 48 Quoted in Ahmad Fathi Zaghlul, *al-Muhamat* (Cairo, 1900) Appendix p.165.
- 49 Seduction by the devil was a formulaic term that was often used in pre-1882 Egyptian legal tribunals to ascribe an admission of guilt to the defendant.
- 50 DWQ, *Majlis al-Ahkam*, Register S/7/10/3, 665 (old), case no 455 pp.152–3, 15 Jumada I 1275/21 December 1858.
- 51 DWQ, *Zabtiyyat Iskandariyya*, Register L/4/18/4, 1675 (old), case no 228 pp.23–6, 13 Rabi` II 1295/16 April 1878.
- 52 DWQ, *Zabtiyyat Iskandariyya*, Register L/4/4/1, 850 (old), letter no 1 to Diwan al-Muhafaza p.3, 29 Dhu al-Hijja 1271/12 September 1855. The ‘exile’ sentence was not unique to Christina: it was stipulated in various laws that non-Egyptian trouble-makers should be sent to their countries of origin after they had served their prison sentences. In fact, such techniques of exile were one important way to define ‘Egyptianness’.
- 53 DWQ, *Diwan al-Dakhiliyya*, *Mukatabat ‘Arabi*, box 6, 27 Safar 1286/8 June 1869.
- 54 DWQ, *Zabtiyyat Misr*, Register L/2/6/3, case no 5 pp.3–5, 27 Dhu al-Hijja 1294/2 January 1878.
- 55 DWQ, *Zabtiyyat Misr*, Register L/2/6/4, 2032 (old), case no 819 p.191, 8 Rajab 1295/8 July 1878.
- 56 DWQ, *Muhafazat Misr*, Register L/1/20/8 1108 (old), case no 5 pp.16–19, 10 Rabi` II 1278/15 December 1861.
- 57 DWQ, *Zabtiyyat Misr*, Register L/2/6/1, case no 24 pp.36–44, 25 Rajab 1294/5 August 1877.
- 58 J. L. Burckhardt, *Arabic Proverbs; or, The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians, Illustrated from Their Proverbial Sayings Current at Cairo* (London, 1875, reprinted 1972) pp.174–6.
- 59 Van Nieuwkerk, *A Trade Like Any Other* p.27.
- 60 Tucker, *Women* pp.154–5.
- 61 This article specified that punishments of *ta’zir* should vary according to the status and position of the accused in society. For the text of the article see Zaghlul, *al-Muhamat*, Appendix p.161. The lower court, *Majlis al-Mudiriyya*, had sentenced him to 75 lashes; *Majlis Tanta*, however, apparently deciding that he was a member of the ‘middle ranks’ (*min awasit al-nas*), and not from the ‘lower ranks’ (*min ahad al-nas*), lowered the punishment to three months’ hard labour.
- 62 DWQ, *Majlis al-Ahkam*, Register S/7/10/1, 663 (old), case no 276 p.168, end of Muharram 1275/9 September 1858.

- 63 DWQ, *Muhafazat Misr*, Register L/1/20/8, 1108 (old), case no 6 pp.19–24, Rabi` II 1278/15 October 1861. This last conviction – the conviction of Nafisa and her husband – was odd, since the article referred to (QS, ch.5, art.7) concerns negligent public officials.
- 64 DWQ, *Majlis al-Ahkam*, Register S/7/10/20, 622 (old), case no 695 p.107, 28 Shawwal 1280/6 April 1864.
- 65 See, for example, the case of gambling followed by a fight that led to death in the grocery shop of a Greek subject in Tanta: DWQ, *Majlis al-Ahkam*, Register S/7/10/31, 635 (old), case no 26 pp.15–17, 8 Jumada I 1282/29 September 1865.
- 66 A transcript of the original banning order is in DWQ, *Majlis al-Ahkam*, Register S/7/4/33, 242 (old), letter to Majlis Isti'naf Qibli no 65 pp.174–5, 9 Sha'ban 1281/20 January 1865.